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ABSTRACT

One way for colleges to meet the demand for a wider range of learning opportunities for adults in Great Britain is to provide more flexibility within the further education system. The concept of flexible learning involves the modification of delivery systems, specific providing agencies, target populations, specific determinants such as geographic location, and institutional determinants. Because the flexible learning approach is learner-centered, it requires a greater emphasis on negotiation, counseling, and guidance to help learners to identify and progress through the most appropriate learning program to meet their individual needs. To help make Britain's further education system more flexible, policymakers should encourage the implementation of staff and organizational development programs for colleges and should have examining and validating bodies explain and disseminate more widely exactly how much individual discretion and flexibility they already allow. Appended to this report are five case studies, a model for curriculum-led organizational change, a discussion of the policies of examining and validating bodies concerning flexible learning opportunities, criteria for Further Education Unit (FEU) financial support for flexible learning projects in colleges and local educational agencies, a list of flexible learning support agencies, and suggestions for further reading. (MN)

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Flexible learning opportunities

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Dear Sir/Madam

FLEXIBLE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

I enclose a copy of the above document which outlines FEU policy as to how the FHE system could become more flexible. It is based on a report by the study group described in Appendix 1. The need for more flexibility is not confined to the education sector, but in this document we identify dimensions of flexibility that particularly apply to education.

After reviewing briefly the existing situation within further education, the document starts from a stereotype of "The Teacher in the Classroom... with a group of Learners all pursuing the same Activity at the same Time", and then examines the possibilities of achieving greater flexibility from that (apocryphal?) focus. Thus Tables 1, 2 & 3 suggest dimensions of flexibility, that deserve consideration with respect to LEARNERS, TEACHERS and MANAGERS. Modes of learning and attendance; methods of assessment; access and accreditation; content and objectives; accountability and rewards; resources and their effective utilisation - all these comprise the vocabulary of flexibility. Most if not all of the practices suggested already exist. What this document does is to bring them together, exemplify them, identify gaps and suggest ways forward, from a curricular viewpoint.

The Preface makes the point that "progressing towards flexibility is dependant on personal and organisational attitudes as well as on resources". Thus whilst the high technology of distance learning and the high level of funding associated with OPEN-TECH and PICKUP, are welcome as contributory factors to increased flexibility, this document is concerned to point out that there is much that can be done without large-scale interventions.

Flexibility in learning is about optimising the autonomy of the learner; and whether it is a single teacher designing work-based assignments, a course tutor allowing access on the basis of experience or an LEA encouraging outreach provision - there are few who cannot contribute to this aim.

Yours faithfully

Jack Mansell

JACK MANSELL
Chief Officer

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b) to determine priorities for action to improve the provision of further education and to make recommendations as to how such improvement can be effected;

c) to carry out studies in further education and to support investigations of and experimentation in, and the development of further education curricula and to contribute to and assist in the evaluation of initiatives in further education;

d) to disseminate and publish information and to assist in the dissemination and publication of information about recommendations for and experiments and developments in further education.

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Preface

i In its response to the MSC Open Tech initiative[1], the FEU Board of Management urged the development of flexible learning opportunities for all individuals post-16, whether in employment or not, for vocational and/or social purposes.

ii The FEU promised to work with other agencies in encouraging and monitoring developments in this area and a study group was established to advise the Board of Management what support the FEU might give. The study group, whose membership is given in Appendix 1 of this document, advised that, notwithstanding any financial support from the FEU for flexible learning development, an immediately necessary task is that of awareness-raising. This document is the product of that thinking and the Board of Management is grateful for the contribution made by the study group.

iii This document attempts to identify in curricular terms the various dimensions of flexibility that merit consideration by LEA's and colleges. In particular it discusses these dimensions as they might be perceived by learners, teachers and education managers; and, without necessarily judging the degrees of flexibility that are currently employed within FE, it is suggested that more attention could be given to removing the barriers and constraints to learning which, it is claimed, continue to exist.

iv In curricular terms *flexible learning is defined in this document as the creation of learning opportunities tailored to meet the needs of the learner*. Components of this concept include learner autonomy and effectiveness, which are dependent in turn on the extent to which the process of learning is matched to the individual learner's needs for employment or otherwise, via negotiation and counselling and guidance.

v Moving to more flexible learning provisions is challenging not only for the learner and the teacher but also the for LEA and college manager, for whom the problems of resourcing and organisational support may be more immediate. In this context several of the Appendices describe how some of the resource and organisational constaints have been faced. It is also important to note that the FHE examining and validating bodies are themselves in favour of more flexible approaches but report that not all colleges are fully exercising the discretion and flexibility which is already available to them.

vi The thesis of this document is relatively simple: progressing towards flexibility is dependent on personal and organisational attitudes as well as on resources. Nevertheless, in its work on vocational preparation and its role as a resource agent for the DES PICKUP initiative[1], the FEU has sponsored many projects in flexible learning. Readers will find a similar invitation to LEAs and colleges to apply for FEU support for small-scale innovations. However, it is hoped that this document will be accepted by the FE system as a helpful stimulus to discussion rather than an open invitation to spend money.

Jack Mansell
Chief Officer

1 *FEU Response to an Open Tech programme*. FEU, June 1981.

1 PICKUP (Professional, Industry and Commerical Up-dating) is the name of the DES initiative designed to follow up its discussion paper *Continuing education: post experience vocational education for those in employment*. DES, 1980 and the responses to it. The FEU acts as a primary agency in sponsoring PICKUP projects.

I The Further Education Context

1. There is general agreement that to meet its future social, economic and political needs the country must provide a wider range of learning opportunities for its population as a whole than it has to date[1]. It is also recognised that, as in other areas of human activity, some of the ways in which we think about and organise our education system militates against the promotion, take-up and further development of such learning opportunities as exist at the moment, let alone those which may become available and necessary in the future.

2. Although this document is primarily directed at those who work in colleges of further and higher education, it also seeks to persuade those in all other agencies involved in our education system of the need to develop a wider range of learning opportunities. Such agencies include the schools, local authorities, training establishments, examining and validating bodies, trade unions and employers, as well as national government and its various agencies. Without the support of these other agencies, the degree to which the colleges of further and higher education are able to change the existing system of education by themselves is necessarily limited.

3. Some might argue that the prerogative to make changes to the existing system lies not inside the colleges, but in the decision-making processes of local and national government, of industrial relations, and so on. For example, the types of learning opportunity available to people is influenced by the decisions made by employers to support financially certain types of education, and by those decisions made by central and local government to provide public money for other parts of the system.

4. However, the main argument of this document rests on the fundamental assumption that there is considerable potential within the existing system of education for the creation of more learning opportunities than currently exist. Whilst some individual colleges, or groups of them, have shown considerable initiative in further developing the number and range of opportunities within their part of the system, just as other agencies have done in other parts, much of the potential remains untapped. Our intention is to encourage the existing system to be more flexible, and thereby, more responsive, to the current and future demands made upon it, an intention we share with other agencies[1].

5. Our proposals are based upon existing agencies and those recently proposed, such as Open Tech. However, we recognise that the range of learning opportunities available within our society, and likely to be available in the future, is not confined to the formal institutions of our schools, colleges and training establishments. Hence, our intention is also to encourage the expansion of the range of learning opportunities rather than to reduce them, recognising and valuing those opportunities which exist outside the formal institutions in a wide variety of different agencies.

6. The availability of learning opportunities, and therefore, the degree to which individuals have access to them are restricted at the moment by the existence of many apparently unnecessary constraints: inflexible pre-conditions for entry; complex administrative, financial and legal regulations; and hidebound conventions and traditions. In some cases, though not all, these restrictions are as much to do with how people within the education and training system perceive it to be of limited flexibility, as with the actual existence of concrete obstacles. Particularly in the area of new technological developments, the record of provision to date is not so laudible as that for the more traditional areas of knowledge, skills and occupations.

7. Whilst it is possible that some of this merely reflects our general human preference for the known and the secure, there are a number of concrete obstacles which constrain our ability to meet new demands. Problems –

1 Central Policy Review Staff. *Education, training and industrial performance*. HMSO. 1980
Department of Education and Science. *Continuing education: post experience vocational education for those in employment*. DES, 1980
The Russell Report. *Adult education: a plan for development*. HMSO, 1973

1 A number of agencies have published consultative documents and proposals concerned with flexible learning and the FEU gratefully acknowledge their influence on its thinking: –
Council for Educational Technology. *Open learning systems in further education and training: a discussion of the issues and recommendations to government*. CET, 1980
Manpower Services Commission. *An 'Open tech' programme: to help meet adult training and retraining needs at technician and related levels*. MSC, 1981
Manpower Services Commission Training Services Division. *'Open tech' next steps*. MSC, 1981
National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education. *Open learning: on Association statement*. NATFHE, 1981

such as difficulties of entry, inequality of funding, disparities of geographical coverage, temporal and physical requirements of attendance, and lack of co-operation between agencies – all require resolution if participation in learning by our population is to increase.

8. Other problems, particularly those associated with discontinuities in education, and in validation and accreditation, lie at the root of many of our traditional practices and will be less easy to resolve. For example, society continues to assign different values to that part of our education system which is "academic", as compared with that which is "technical/vocational". This reflects: the way society values certain jobs, and the preparation for them, above others; the way in which it rewards certain job-holders above others; and the way in which it supports with public money education for some jobs whilst expecting employers or even individuals to support education for other jobs.

9. The colleges of further and higher education operate, like other agencies, according to a number of underlying, often unstated assumptions about how learning should be organised:—

- A Model of Teacher Activity in the classroom which specifies a relatively low level of learner activity (reception of the teacher's "message") in a reasonably-sized group with uniformly-paced learning;

- A Controlling Agency, the college, which organises the learning process (through its timetabling and examining procedures, its rules of attendance, and so on) and excludes the participation of other agencies in that process;

- A Target Population which is specifically defined educationally (by intelligence and academic achievement), physically (by age, sex and health), vocationally (by occupation or intended occupation), and hence socially and economically (by the combination of the other factors); and

- A Number of Specific Determinants such as geographical location (with its impact upon opportunities), the pattern and size of demand (requiring the enrolment of "viable numbers" at the same time each academic year) and financial restrictions (imposed by the structure of fees and payments, by regulations for student grants, and so on).

These assumptions combine to exclude a large proportion of our population from the colleges, and from further and higher education. Whilst in many cases this might not arise from deliberate policy, it results from an unwillingness to change existing operational procedures and/or general lack of interest.

10. It is true that there has been some movement away from some of these traditional assumptions – for example, with regard to the model of teacher activity, in attempts to encourage college attendance amongst previously excluded groups (such as the handicapped, the unemployed, mature students and the "non-traditional" vocations) and in tackling specific determinants (by fee-exemptions for certain groups, the use of out-centres and so on). Flexible learning requires a more fundamental re-assessment of how our existing education system operates.

II Flexibility Within The Existing Further Education System

11. The existing education system already displays some features of flexibility which are both noteworthy as examples and indicative of the potential for flexibility[1]. As part of its agency role for the DES PICKUP initiative, the FEU has already sponsored a number of flexible learning initiatives[2].

12. For the purpose of this document, such examples are described in curricular terms, since in this way it is possible to avoid issues like the multiplicity of providing agencies, the complexity of funding arrangements and the variety of administrative regulations which, whilst no doubt being essential, confuse discussion. However, it is important to recognise that the issue of access to our education system (the degree to which the system is open to all potential learners) is dependent upon the resolution of a number of difficulties, not just the curricular ones.

13. Using a stereotype of education as a focus, the teacher in the classroom or workshop with a group of learners all pursuing the same activity at the same time, it is possible to see flexibility as the opportunity to move along a number of different dimensions as appropriate. To the extent that this presupposes a stereotype, it will be seen that this is not necessarily an operational model of education, but rather that teachers already engage in flexible approaches to meet the needs of their learners. The following tables demonstrate dimensions of flexibility, but are not intended to imply the general desirability of working towards one extreme or another; nor do the dimensions exist independently of each other, either as seen from the different points of view of the learner, the teacher and the educational manager, or as seen as a whole. Rather, movement along particular dimensions will be accompanied by corresponding movement along others, if the resultant programme is to be internally consistent. For example, as seen from the learner's point of view, movement towards the greater use of libraries, resource centres and outside specialists (see Resources for Learning in Table 1 page 5) could only be accommodated if the teacher (see Table 2, page 6) was willing to undertake such a change in his or her activity and the manager (see Table 3, page 7) also made this administratively acceptable.

14. The combination of these three points of view[1] – learner, teacher and educational manager – as well as the outcomes, gives an impression of the potential scope of 'flexibility' as a concept. To it could be added the views of other groups, such as parents, employers, trade unionists and other 'users' of our education system. However, this is not to suggest that all views of flexibility will be congruent and non-problematic. For example, the views of management regarding the efficient utilisation of the teachers or trainers for whom it is responsible may at times conflict with the views of the teachers or trainers themselves if 'flexibility' was perceived as leading to a worsening of conditions of employment. Thus, any attempts to increase the flexibility of the system as a whole may well have to resolve particular conflicts of interest if they are to be successful.

15. The possibility of such conflicts has meant that many colleges have developed a strategy for the introduction of greater flexibility into their activities. However, for those colleges that have yet to develop a strategy, there are approaches by which colleges have successfully developed more flexible provision. Such approaches could be adopted as gradual sequences giving potential for flexibility, including the opportunities created by new technologies, new student groups, and so on. Consequently, it is possible to enter such sequences at a variety of points and to pursue phases of them simultaneously or in varying order. One eminently practical sequence[2] is as follows: —

1. A number of reviews have been carried out. See, for example:—
Council for Educational Technology (1980) op. cit.
Regional Advisory Council for the Organisation of Further Education in the East Midlands. *Survey of arrangements for open access to further and higher education*. RACOFEEM, 1981 (Summarised in Appendix VI of this document)
Twining, J. *Open learning systems for technicians*. Guildford Educational Services, 1981
Work has also been carried out by the Open Learning Systems Information and Consultancy Unit (at Coombe Lodge). The Coombe Lodge Information Bank houses case-study material for reference.
2. See for instance: *Curriculum opportunity* FEU, 1983, Open college (stage B) criminology distance learning unit (RP74); Manchester Open College Federation (RP63); Staff development for open learning tutors (RP72); Individual flexible vocational education for adults (RP77). Information bulletins on these research projects are available from the FEU.

1. An FEU project is currently investigating the experience, attitudes and perceptions of students, teachers and managers in open-learning situations. See FEU PIB RP57.
2. An expanded version of this example is discussed in Appendix 7.

(i) an extension of the usual classroom arrangement is the 'workshop'[1], which allows students to study either individually or in groups. Here teachers prepare software[2] for use in a 'workshop' in which they act as facilitators/consultants to individual learners or groups. (Examples include Communications and Mathematics workshops, such as the one described in Appendix 2);

(ii) another move is to establish a resources for learning section in or associated with the library, where learning materials are housed, but the continuous presence of teaching staff is not required. The teachers do offer, however, an organised advice and counselling service;

(iii) it then becomes possible to free learners from unnecessary attendance at the centre, enabling staff to diversify their activities and releasing 'workshop' accommodation for other usages such as tutorial and/or private study areas.

To achieve such movement requires, of course, changes not only on the part of the learner (as compared with what he or she has probably experienced, for example, at school), but also on the parts of the teacher and educational manager *and* the college organisation in which they work.

16. As indicated above then, there are already sufficient examples of it to suggest that flexibility can be claimed to be an important feature of our existing education system[3]. It is perhaps only in lack of conceptual clarity and coherence that the current situation is unsatisfactory. The next section of this document discusses this problem.

17. However, in passing it is important to note those areas where flexibility might theoretically be possible, even desirable from certain points of view, but where it is difficult to obtain significant evidence of real movement. Most examples of flexible learning cluster around certain key issues, notably the process of learning, whilst relatively fewer are concerned with the aims and content of the learning, the characteristics and stage of development of the learner, and the method of assessment. That is, it seems the case at the moment that flexible learning is chiefly concerned with the issue of the delivery of pre-determined curricula, mainly from examining and validating bodies, to groups of learners determined by traditional methods of assessing their existing ability, and using traditional methods of assessment to measure the achievement of the learners. Similarly, almost without exception, the incentives available to teachers are still geared towards traditional measures of the academic achievements of their students (though there may be local compromises on the issue); and the system of funding in our education system remains essentially unchanged.

1 The term 'workshop' although initially associated with the practical activities related to mechanical engineering construction, technology, etc., has in recent years also been applied to curriculum and staff development activities: the construction of aims and objectives, assessment, teaching and learning material, etc. It is used here to describe any location in which individual students, or groups of them, are able to pursue activity-orientated learning (via assignments, exercises, practical and simulated experience, and so on), generally at their own pace. Within a broad intention of catering for a range of experience, ability, needs and readiness on the part of learners, the role of the teacher(s) is to create a positive, supportive and predominantly successful learning environment, their duties may include the production of learning materials and/or the identification of materials produced by others, perhaps commercially. Access for learners to the 'workshop' might be on an individually – or group – timetabled basis, by appointment, by referral from other learning activities, or on a drop-in basis. The learning processes will be negotiated individually or collaboratively, with learning materials designed to meet such situations.
2 An FEU project is currently indexing such materials, generated by colleges for vocational preparation workshops. See FEU RP147.
3 References to further examples are contained in Appendix 11: Further Reading.

Table 1 The Learner
From the LEARNER'S point of view flexibility might be seen as movement along dimensions which range:—

				OUTCOMES	REFERENCES IN APPENDICES	
AIMS AND CONTENT OF THE LEARNING		FROM the necessity of accepting a curriculum determined by the teacher or trainer, or by some other agency such as a professional body or examining/validating body.	TOWARDS a system which is also able to devise a curriculum to meet his or her own particular learning needs.	Adult Literacy Courses for the unemployed	2	5
CHARACTERISTICS AND STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEARNER		FROM the necessity of presenting evidence of existing ability in the form of traditional, academic examination passes or tests.	TOWARDS a system which also recognises the validity of other evidence of existing ability, such as work and life experience.		3	5
PROCESS OF LEARNING	MODE OF LEARNING	FROM the adoption of the essentially passive activity of note-taking in the classroom.	TOWARDS that of more active and appropriate methods of learning such as discovery learning, experimentation, and practical activities, with the teacher acting as an advisor and organiser of resources.		2	5
	RESOURCES FOR LEARNING	FROM the concept of the teacher or trainer as the sole resource of experience, knowledge and skills.	TOWARDS the use of other types of resources, including textbooks, resource centres, and libraries, both inside and outside the classroom, and people such as specialists, peers, and tutors.		2	4
	MODE OF ATTENDANCE	FROM the requirement to attend certain learning activities according to a specific time-table in a specific place.	TOWARDS a system which does not only require attendance at a centre but offers other types of support via correspondence, telephone or tutorials.	The Open Univ BBC Computer Literacy Course (with NEC) NEC/Correspondence Colleges TEC/British Telecommunications Course BEC/DPS	4	
	PACE OF LEARNING	FROM the control by the teacher or trainer of the pace of learning (via control of the pace of the teaching of the group as a whole).	TOWARDS more flexible pacing, including self-pacing, in which the learner has control of the rate at which he or she learns, perhaps with the assistance of an individualised programme or tuition, modular learning or the use of a computer (computer-assisted learning, CAL).		2	4
	INTERACTION WITH OTHERS	FROM learning without interaction with other learners, or with teacher-controlled interaction only.	TOWARDS more inter-active learning activities which involve group discussions, games and simulations.		3	5
METHOD OF ASSESSMENT		FROM the necessity of presenting evidence of attainment via a pass-fail written examination.	TOWARDS other modes of presenting evidence of attainment via oral tests, practical assessments, self assessment, etc, presented as a detailed record of achievement or profile.		2 3	5

Table 2 The Teacher
From the TEACHER'S point of view flexibility might be seen as movement along dimensions which range:—

				OUTCOMES	REFERENCE IN APPENDICES		
AIMS AND CONTENT OF THE LEARNING		FROM the necessity of meeting an externally—devised curriculum and/or syllabus	TOWARDS a system in which the teacher or trainer is able to develop a curriculum to meet the needs of individual learner(s), perhaps in consultation with others (such as employers, teachers, trainers etc) and the learner(s)	Adult Literacy Industrial Language Training, Short courses for Local Industry		2	5
CHARACTERISTICS AND STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEARNER		FROM the necessity of relying upon traditional academic examination passes and tests as evidence of the learners existing ability	TOWARDS a system which allows the teacher or trainer to use other forms of evidence (such as work or life experience) of the learner's existing ability			3	5
PROCESS OF TEACHING	MODE OF LEARNING	FROM the traditional activity of the teacher or trainer in the classroom or workshop	TOWARDS that which requires recognition and more active participation on the part of the learner(s) such as discovery learning, experimentation, and so on, and an advisory/organising role on the part of the teacher or trainer			2	5
	RESOURCES FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING SKILLS	FROM a presumption of the teacher or trainer as the sole resource of experience, knowledge	TOWARDS the use of other resources, including co-operation with other colleagues (for example, in team teaching or preparation of materials), with outside specialists, and the learners themselves.	Tutorial activity within BBC Computer Literacy Course TEC/British Telecommunications Course BEC/DPS	2	3	4
	MODE OF ATTENDANCE	FROM the constraints of a particular timetable and location of activity	TOWARDS an opportunity to support learners by a range of methods, not only requiring attendance according to a specific timetable, such as by telephone, correspondence, etc.				
	PACE OF LEARNING	FROM determination of the pace of learning by the pace of the learning group as a whole	TOWARDS involvement in a system which recognises individual differences in the pace of learning.		2		
	INTERACTION BETWEEN LEARNERS	FROM a learning situation which does not allow interaction with other learners.	TOWARDS a learning situation which allows group discussion, games and simulations, and so on.			3	5
METHOD OF ASSESSMENT		FROM the necessity of relying upon pass/fail (terminal) written examinations as evidence of the learner(s) achievements	TOWARDS the use of other means of assessment to determine learner(s) achievements and provide feedback to the teacher or trainer on a systematic and continuing basis.		2	3	5
ACCOUNTABILITY		FROM the necessity of recruiting a specific number of learners before being able to offer a course.	TOWARDS a system which allows the teacher or trainer to develop programmes for learners and which does not use simple measures of his or her time (such as class contact hours with a given number of learners in each class) or resultant entry to higher level courses.	ILEA Appendix II*			5
REWARDS		FROM the perceived constants of a system which equates incentives for performance (promotion, salary and status) with notions of the academic.	TOWARDS a system which takes account of other measures of performance, such as the difficulty of the learning matter, the ability of the learner(s) and the activity of the teacher.				

* see FEU *Transition and access* FEU, 1981

Table 3 The Educational Manager
From the EDUCATIONAL MANAGER of the existing education system's point of view flexibility might be seen as movement along dimensions which range:—

			OUTCOMES	REFERENCES IN APPENDICES
UTILISATION OF RESOURCES	FROM a system which makes it difficult to efficiently deploy teachers and resources to meet the needs of all learners, particularly outside the existing academic year.	TOWARDS one which facilitates the efficient deployment of teachers and resources, all year round.	Extended college year	3
	FROM a system which is commonly fragmented and compartmentalised between and within institutions.	TOWARDS one which effectively co-ordinates the activities of different institutions.	LEA co-ordination	3
FUNDING	FROM a system which is financed and regulated according to traditional notions of academic work, class contact hours and minimum enrolments.	TOWARDS one which recognises the use of other measures of activity, such as the special needs of a local community, the teaching difficulties, faced, and so on.		
	FROM a system which is largely dependent upon central and local government finance and regulation.	TOWARDS one which allows greater autonomy to local agencies to finance their own activities.		

III Towards a Definition of Flexible Learning

18. One of the features of the increasing flexibility identifiable within our existing education and training system in recent years is the plethora of terms used to describe its various aspects. Current terms are associated with:—

- Delivery systems, such as correspondence courses, computer-assisted learning (CAL), distance learning, where some sort of technology is used to bring the teacher or trainer's "message" to the learner and the response back;
- Specific providing agencies, such as the Open University, Open Tech, Open Colleges, and so on, which are specifically concerned with flexible provision;
- Target populations, such as adult illiterates, the handicapped, technicians, and other groups, defined socially, physically or vocationally for particular attention;
- Specific determinants such as geographical location, demand patterns, size of demand, economic priorities and so on, which determine particular priorities;
- Institutional determinants such as the need to co-ordinate the local activity of several different agencies, perhaps with their different funding arrangements; and
- Combinations of the above.

All are aspects of flexible learning and are sources of particular bits of terminology: the FEU suggests that the term flexible learning embraces them all. It is concerned with the whole education and training system and the whole learning population.

19. Flexible learning is learner-centred. That is, it is concerned with the problems of offering learning opportunities appropriate to the needs of the individual learner, whatever his or her location in the education system. Ideally there are a number of learning opportunities available to any learner; the primary function of flexible learning is to adapt the available learning opportunities to the needs of the learner.

20. In looking at the notion of flexibility from the learner's point of view, four factors which make up the needs of the learner have already been identified (Table 1):—

- the aims and content of the learning
- the characteristics and stage of development of the learner
- the process of learning
  - the mode of learning
  - the resources for learning
  - the mode of attendance
  - the pace of learning
  - interaction with others
- the method of assessment.

The inter-relationship of these four factors will determine the most appropriate way in which particular learning opportunities should be structured and organised to meet the needs of an individual learner; but these decisions will also be affected by the extent to which both the teacher and manager are able to accommodate them.

21. In the case of different learners different learning programmes are likely to emerge even when there is apparent agreement on one of the factors. For example, whilst two learners might agree on the aims and content of the learning, they might well differ with regard to the level of their existing abilities (the one having no academic grounding in the subject, the other having already achieved an 'O' level pass), their preferred method of learning (regular attendance of the college class, as opposed to a correspondence course) and their preferred method of assessment (a sense of personal achievement, as opposed to, a grade C 'A' level pass).

22. However, as has already been stated (Paragraph 17), examples of flexible learning tend to cluster around the process of learning as the primary factor, whilst, relatively speaking, neglecting the others. That is, with certain exceptions (some of which were noted in Section II of this document), there is a tendency to recruit "traditional learners" (as measured by existing examination and test results) to "traditional courses" (often devised by external agencies) using "traditional methods of assessment". There may be several reasons for this:—

* The education system has traditionally taken externally-prescribed syllabuses, or at least syllabuses significantly affected by the demands of external bodies (professional associations, universities and so on), rather than devise programmes according to the needs of individual learners who present themselves. In this sense the system is more concerned with curriculum implementation than curriculum development[1]. This is not to suggest that there is not flexibility within this approach – indeed, this is the case argued by the examining and validating bodies in their responses to questions on the issue[2]. Rather, as recognised by the examining and validating bodies, the system as a whole, and colleges in particular, have existing structures and modes of operation which sustain this approach.

* The methods of funding the system, of providing rewards within it, and of accounting for its performance rely upon an approach – the size of class and the academic level of the work – which probably militates against flexibility beyond that which is possible within the process of learning.

23. The structuring and organising of a learning programme around the four factors (Paragraph 20) potentially optimises the autonomy of the learner. It supports the right of the individual learner to identify his or her own learning needs within a structure which facilitates the process of learning, since there is good evidence to show that by exploiting and optimising the learner's motivation the effectiveness of the learning can be much improved[3]. However, flexible learning should be associated with a progressive approach to the opportunities it makes available to the learner and should be capable of modifying both the preconceived notions of the learner about his or her needs, where these are demonstrably inappropriate, and the learner's prejudices against certain approaches to learning, again where these are inappropriate. This applies equally to those 'non-voluntary' learners who attend compulsorily as employees and perhaps see learning as essentially negative and passive.

1 See *Curriculum control*. FEU, 1981
2 For analysis of responses from examining and validating bodies see appendix 8.
3 See *Further opportunities in focus*. FEU, 1980

24. For these reasons it is important that learners be supported as they progress from pre-entry to exit (perhaps to other opportunities) through a learning opportunity by the processes of negotiation, counselling and guidance:—

* Negotiation recognises both the intention to provide a learner-centred, learner-autonomous programme and the extent to which it is in practice possible to meet the needs of individual learners. The opportunity to negotiate one's own programme should enhance the motivation and the responsibility of the learner. On the one hand negotiation might well represent compromise on the part of the learner or the teacher (or both); on the other, negotiation might well result in clear agreement about the nature of the learning programme to be offered as it affects both sides.

25. Although presented in this way negotiation appears to be a process which only involves two parties, learner and teacher, it is important to note that in such situations negotiation can never be completely open-ended. On the learner's side the degree to which he or she has an open brief will be dependent upon the learner's intentions; where, for example, the wishes and financial support of an employer are involved, these are likely to be of paramount importance, as compared with the position of a learner seeking a programme out of purely personal interest and without other considerations. Similarly, it is likely that the teacher will be constrained by a number of financial and administrative considerations over which he or she has little or no control[1].

26. Counselling and guidance are necessary accompaniments to negotiation, for the learner is dependent upon the support of that information and advice if he or she is to take part adequately in negotiation about the learning programme. Before embarking on a programme the learner will require appropriate advice on its suitability, the range of possible alternative programmes, and so on, perhaps involving some form of initial assessment. On entry to, and during, a programme the learner will need tutorial support about progress and achievement; counselling and guidance here support the

1 For a more detailed discussion of negotiation see 'Negotiating the curriculum' (draft title of a forthcoming FEU publication)

assessment procedures involved in the programme. And at point of exit the learner will often require guidance on access to further learning programmes, either in the immediate future or beyond.[1]

27. The involvement of the learner in the processes of negotiation and, counselling and guidance may well result in variations in the learning programmes engaged in by individual learners and in so far as this is economically and administratively possible, flexible learning seeks to provide equality of provision for each individual. However, whilst recognising that, in theory at least, there may be several ways of achieving the same learning goal, (in terms of learning process, assessment procedures, and so on) and that the perceptions of learners about the appropriateness of particular ways of learning and being assessed are important, flexible learning should set parity of standards with our more traditional educational system.[2] It should, therefore, seek to help learners identify the most appropriate methods of learning for their particular needs without attempting to impose particular models, either 'traditional' or 'radical', on them.

28. The successful achievement of flexible learning for individual learners is probably dependent upon the extent to which it is possible to establish a local focus of activity. Except in the case of a system which operates purely by correspondence, learners will turn in the first instance to some local agency, such as a college, but possibly also a library or information centre, for information about the learning opportunities available to them. The degree to which such an agency is able to act as a local focus will depend upon its ability to provide opportunities itself, and/or to provide information about opportunities provided by other agencies. It may well be that in certain localities a level of co-ordination and agreement has already been reached so that either a particular agency acts as a primary provider of information in an area or all agencies have information about what is provided elsewhere. (For example see the Open College Federation of the North West, Appendix 5.) In other localities such co-ordination and agreement has yet to be achieved.

29. The precise nature of the local focus will result from the network of agreed contributions from a number of individual agencies, subject to local conditions and local requirements. In many cases it may well be that a college, or group of colleges, of higher and further education might well provide the focus of these activities; but the range of agencies may also include employers, community agencies and voluntary associations.

30. This section of the document has attempted to define flexible learning in curricular terms as the adaptation of available learning opportunities to meet the needs of the learner in a way that optimises the autonomy of the learner as well as the effectiveness of the process of learning. It is suggested that the learner's identification of particular aims and content of learning, process of learning and method of assessment should be supported by negotiation and, counselling and guidance; and that the successful support of the learner is probably dependent upon the establishment of some sort of local focus.

1 For a more detailed discussion of counselling and guidance see *Tutoring*. FEU, 1982 and LEWIS, R. *Counselling in open learning: a case study*. National Extension College, 1980

2 BIRCH, D.W. and CUTHBERT, R.E. *Costing open learning in further education*. Council for Educational Technology, 1981
BIRCH, D.W. and LATCHAM, J. *Accounting for academic staff resources for the tutorial support of open learning*. Coombe Lodge Information Bank Paper No. 1605. Further Education Staff College, 1981

IV Removing Constraints on the Development of Flexible Learning

31. Reference has already been made to the conflicts which may arise from the differing views of flexibility between groups and agencies: it would be unrealistic to suggest that the removal of constraints on the development of greater flexibility within our education system will be easily achieved, notwithstanding significant examples of inter-agency co-operation at local level, such as the Open College Federation of the North West, or of increased flexibility within individual colleges, such as FlexiStudy.

32. For a college to establish itself as a focus for flexible learning considerable innovative behaviour is necessary on the part of its staff. In each case the extent to which such innovative behaviour is possible will be dependent upon a unique mix of encouragement and/or perceived necessity, as well as support and development. More often than not the innovative thrust may come from one or two enthusiastic individual teachers. At that stage support will be paramount, whether in terms of additional resources or (merely) management recognition. Continued development and possible expansion, however, will ultimately depend on the support of other, less innovative staff, whether they be teachers, managers or non-teaching staff. For them a programme of staff development will probably be necessary if the innovation is to become a more widespread and more permanent feature of the college (or LEA or inter-agency group's) activities.

33. A staff development programme for flexible learning would seek to translate the demands of the innovative curricular activity into a set of activities for the staff concerned, in the light of their existing experiences and expertise.[1] Awareness of the centrality of the learner in the learning process (the learner-centred approach) would seem to be the essential starting point of such a programme. It is possible that such a staff development programme would lead into what might be regarded as highly specialised activities, such as the development of the skills of preparing distance learning materials, since it is likely that some flexible learning systems might develop very specific activities within certain agencies. The task here is not to prescribe that certain agencies only should undertake such activities, but rather to anticipate that within a flexible learning system a whole range of activities is likely to develop, some of them specialized, and that a staff development programme would need to pay some attention to the relationship between the activities. This argues for an inter-agency, not just a college-based or even inter-college-based approach to staff development.

34. It is also necessary to consider the need for organisational development to meet the demands of flexible learning. In common with other agencies, colleges often display such organisational features as rigid departmentalism, relatively inflexible working arrangements, restrictive administrative procedures and unadventurous attitudes; such constraints on the growth of flexibility will need to be overcome if the range of opportunities open to learners is to be improved and the needs of individual learners met. Because many, if not most, of the courses and students in colleges will still use conventional modes of attendance and processes of learning, based on traditional disciplines, it would be unrealistic to suggest that existing patterns of institutional organisation should disappear. Indeed, experience shows that many flexible learning innovations have emerged within conventional organisational structures. Again, the problem is as described in Paragraph 29 above: moving from an innovatory phase to one of well-established existence. It is the setting up of an organisational structure capable of coping with the demands of both traditional and non-traditional curricular developments that is the critical task. This requires a curriculum-led approach to institutional organisation, and at the time of writing the FEU is sponsoring work in this area.[1]

35. Local authorities have a particularly important part to play in both encouraging a greater degree of flexibility and supporting those agencies, such as the colleges, for which they have statutory responsibility and which are seeking to develop more flexible provision. However, it must be admitted that the legal and financial uncertainties which exist at the moment do not encourage local authorities to take a more progressive view[2], with certain notable exceptions.[3]

1 *Teaching skills*. FEU, 1982

1 See FEU Project Information Bulletin for RP 116
2 *The legal basis of further education*, DES, 1981
3 See, for example, Appendix 5 Open College Federation of the North West

36. The growth of flexible learning may be constrained or supported by national and regional activity. At these levels new initiatives are already under way which seek to build upon the co-operation which already exists between agencies to open up a wider range of learning opportunities and remove the discontinuities of provision within the existing education and training system.[1] Further co-operation between agencies will be required, for example, to provide national and regional counselling and guidance networks, supported by adequate and appropriate information from all the contributing agencies.

37. The examining and validating bodies are perceived by some groups, and notably some teachers, as acting as constraints on flexibility. Our analysis of responses from them suggests that they are broadly supportive of a more flexible approach to the examining and validating of learning programmes, but that they are sensitive to what they perceive to be the administrative and financial constraints at local level.[2] It does seem the case, however, that even some teachers are largely unaware of the methods by which examining and validating bodies operate and can be affected, even where their own immediate colleagues are involved as assessors, moderators and members of examination committees. Thus, it appears that there is a mismatch of perceptions about the flexibility of the existing system on the part of both the examining and validating bodies, and the teachers. The bodies themselves may be able to do more to remove the uncertainties.

38. However, there is some evidence already that some colleges are using greater discretion with regard to the use of pre-determined educational (examination) attainments for entry to courses (free entry 'O' and 'A' level courses, mature student entry to higher education, and so on), though the situation is patchy and confused. There is some movement towards the accreditation of experience for entry to courses, particularly for mature students seeking entry to higher education; within the context of the experientially-based programmes envisaged under the New Training Initiative (and the Youth Training Scheme) the recognition of experience for purposes of progression will be an essential requirement. Yet, whilst some colleges are already taking experience (occupational, social and personal) into account in their admission procedures, few institutions have a definite policy with respect to the accreditation of experience for exemption purposes. The tendency is to rely upon ad-hoc face-to-face interviews, rather than to have a positive accreditation system (which could well be self-funding) based on professional assessors, records of experience and achievement and profiles to assess the nature and quality of that experience. This is an important area which the FEU for its part would like to see develop.[1]

39. The FEU recognises the part that national agencies (such as itself) can play in encouraging innovation. Whilst it cannot compete with the levels of funding which are available from both the MSC Open Tech programme[2] and the DES PICKUP initiative[3], the Board of Management of the FEU would like to make available to individual colleges, small groups of them or LEA's, small sums of money for innovations in flexible learning. Such innovations might be focussed on learners (for example, in the form of new learning processes and methods of assessment), on teachers (for example, in the form of staff development activities), or on management (for example, in the form of institutional development). It is hoped that this document will be used by colleges and LEA's to begin to draw up proposals for support from the FEU and in particular that Tables 1, 2 and 3 on pages 5-7 begin to suggest appropriate subjects for such proposals.[4]

1 *A New Training Initiative: an agenda for action*. MSC, 1981
A New Training Initiative: a programme for action. HMSO, 1981
Open tech task group report MSC, 1982
2 For analysis of responses from examining and validating bodies, see Appendix 8

1 *Curriculum opportunity: a map of experiential learning in entry requirements to higher and further education award bearing courses*. FEU, 1983
2 *Open tech task group report*. MSC, 1982
3 For details of criteria for FEU support under PICKUP, apply to the FEU
4 See Appendix 9 for a set of criteria for FEU funding to flexible learning projects.

V Summary

40. This document seeks to raise the awareness of LEA's and colleges to the challenge of creating learning opportunities for all learners post-16, tailored to the needs of the individual. The FEU takes the view that progressing towards flexibility of opportunity is as much dependent on attitudes as on resources. (Preface.)

41. It is argued that the future social, economic and political needs of the country require the provision of a wider range of learning opportunities for its population as a whole than has been provided to date. Whilst the further and higher education system is influenced by agencies and factors which are outside the control of colleges, there is much that colleges can do themselves to encourage the system to be more flexible including the development of their own staff and organisations. The main argument of this document is that there is considerable potential within the existing system for the creation of more learning opportunities than currently exist. (Paragraphs 1-5.)

42. The constraints on the availability of learning opportunities and on the degree to which people have access to them are noted in passing: inflexible pre-conditions for entry; complex administrative, financial and legal regulations; and hidebound conventions and traditions. They result in a variety of inequalities, disparities and discontinuities (Paragraphs 6-7).

43. However, at the root of many of these problems lie the fundamental assumptions on which the further education system rests:—

* a particular model of teacher activity and learner response;

* a controlling agency, the college which organises the opportunities for learning;

* a target population, which is narrowly defined;

* a number of specific determinants, such as location, size of demand and so on.

Together these assumptions combine to exclude a large proportion of our population from our colleges, despite increased flexibility in some cases.

44. Whilst acknowledging the issues which arise from the existence of a multiplicity of providing agencies, the complexity of funding arrangements and the variety of administrative regulations, the document discusses flexibility in curricular terms. (Paragraphs 11-12.)

45. It identifies three inter-related dimensions along which flexibility may be seen:—

* from the learner's point of view;

* from the teacher's point of view;

* from the educational manager's point of view.

In each case the dimension is illustrated by typical outcomes and references in appendices of existing LEA and college activity. Together these various dimensions, supported by examples, give an indication of the potential scope of flexibility. (Paragraphs 13-17, Tables 1, 2, 3 and Appendices 2-7.)

46. The document seeks to clarify the definition of flexible learning by bringing together all the concepts associated with delivery systems, specific providing agencies, target populations, specific determinants (such as geographical location) and institutional determinants. Flexible learning is concerned with all of these concepts, but its primary characteristic is the centrality of the learner. Flexible learning is learner-centred. (Paragraphs 18-19.)

47. From the learner's point of view four factors are identified as constituting the learner's needs:—

* The aims and content of the learning;

* The characteristics and stage of development of the learner;

* The process of learning (mode, resources, attendance, pace and interaction);

* The method of assessment.

The inter-relatedness of these four factors results in different learning programmes for different learners, though the tendency has been, to date, for the process of learning to be seen as the primary area of flexibility. (Paragraphs 20-22.)

48. The structuring and organising of a learning programme around the above four factors has the potential to optimise the autonomy of the learner. Negotiation and counselling and guidance, have a key role in helping the learner to identify and progress through the most appropriate learning programme to meet his or her needs. The successful provision of a negotiated programme supported by counselling, guidance and assessment, is dependent upon the creation of some local focus. (Paragraphs 23-29.)

49. It is recognised that there are significant constraints yet to be overcome in making the further education system more flexible. Several strategies are identified for overcoming them:—

- a staff development programme for colleges (Paragraphs 32-33);

- an organisational development programme (Paragraph 34);

- local authority regional and national initiatives (Paragraphs 35-36);

- the encouragement of the examining and validating bodies and the wider dissemination by them of the discretion and flexibility they already allow (paragraph 37) and which could be further developed by colleges (Paragraph 38).

50. Finally, the document recognises that the FEU has a part to play itself in encouraging innovation within further education, and indicates its willingness to consider support for proposals from LEA's and colleges for work on flexible learning. (Paragraph 39 and Appendix 8.)

APPENDIX I

Membership of the FEU Flexible Learning Steering Committee

Jack Latcham
Associate Tutor
The Further Education Staff College

Howard Rees
Principal
Portsmouth College of Art
Design and FE

George Rowlands
Principal
Fielden Park College of FE

Richard Freeman
Executive Director
National Extension College

Janet H Elliot
Deputy Chief Officer
Business Education Council

Ron K Gray
Assistant Chief Officer (Education)
Technician Education Council

Paul Bennett
Education Officer
National Association of Teachers
in Further and Higher Education

Geoffrey Hubbard
Director
Council for Educational Technology

John Coffey
Council for Educational Technology

Stewart Dalziel
Deputy Director of Training
MSC/TSD

Derek Crossland
Inter-College Co-ordinator
Open College Federation of the North-West

Ken Hebborn
Ministry of Defence

Bob Challis
Staff Tutor
The Further Education Staff College

Bill Bagley
Head of Education Services
Peterborough Technical College

Jack Mansell (Chairman)
Chief Officer
FEU

John Blythe (Secretary)
Development Officer
FEU

Pat Noble
Development Officer
FEU (from January 1983)

APPENDIX 2

Case Study: Bradford & Ilkley Community College

Mathematics Workshop

This is a college-based flexible learning system offering any course in mathematics anyone may want on an individualised learning basis. The Workshop has been in operation for six years, the aims being:

1. To offer a tutorial service in mathematics for students and staff;
2. To offer the facility to anyone in the community who may wish to use it;
3. To have available learning packages, text books, word cards, review lessons and past examination papers with solutions;
4. To assist lecturers requiring aids, back up or teaching materials for mathematics classes;
5. To assist with the development of mathematics as a course or within a course throughout the College;
6. To develop computer assisted learning;
7. To maintain a collection of pocket electronic calculators for use by students and staff;
8. To offer test facilities in basic numeracy with computer assisted marking.

To achieve these aims we use structured learning materials, offering these to individual users. The Workshop does not operate on formal class teaching, but is instead tailored to suit the needs of the individual. The Workshop is open for 56 hours per week and has academic staff on duty for the whole of this time to give tutorial and counselling assistance as required.

There are about 1000 students using the Workshop each week spending as little as 10 minutes or up to 3 hours each.

In September 1981 an academic decision was made that all the 'O' level and 'A' level mathematics students would work as individuals and study toward their exam at their own pace, therefore no formal classes in these two subjects are offered in the College. The programme of work is based on set text books. Each student works through a series of units. Each unit consists of a booklet on one topic or group of topics. It contains instructions for the student to read specified parts of a text book and work through specified exercises, with comments on points of difficulty. Each student can attend the Workshop at times to suit themselves but are recommended to put in a certain number of hours per week. Every student is allocated a counsellor who generally keeps an eye on his/her progress, marks their assignments and deals with problems arising out of the course. At present there are 422 students registered for 'O' level mathematics and another 184 for 'A' level mathematics.

It is apparent that students working as individuals become more responsible for their own learning and this is borne out by significantly better results when sitting their examinations.

Two advantages to the students studying in an open learning workshop are:

1. Flexibility of attendance;
2. Individualised learning and working at their own pace.

For the College the main advantange is to be able to offer a course even if there is only one student requiring it. He or she can then, for registration purposes, ie class size, be grouped with another 11 all working on different courses even at different levels.

FEU Commentary

This example displays the following characteristics of flexibility as seen from the perspective of the learner, the teacher and the educational manager:—

1. THE LEARNER

Aims and content of the learning built around the needs of the learner.

Process of Learning:	use of non-traditional methods with the teacher as organiser and advisor;

use of non-traditional learning resources, specially devised;

pace of learning determined by the learner.

Method of Assessment: self-assessment, and progression to further education and training.

Disadvantages to the learner: progress very much dependent on personal motivation and commitment.

2. THE TEACHER

Aims and content not pre-determined (beyond basic literacy and numeracy as "content areas").

Methods of Learning: use of non-traditional methods, with organising/advisory role and individualised teaching.

preparation of materials with other staff.

pace of learning determined by individual learner's progress.

All supporting the learner through a process of negotiation and, counselling and guidance, with assessment.

Method of Assessment: no constraints; no examining and validating procedures involved.

Disadvantages to the teacher: lack of security of a pre-determined programme; blurring of subject boundaries; record-keeping; and preparation of materials.

3. THE EDUCATIONAL MANAGER

No gains; and some losses in terms of staff/student ratio perhaps, and expenditure on materials.

APPENDIX 3

Case Study: Ulster Polytechnic Small Business Development Programme

Aim of Workshop

This Workshop, which has been developed in association with the Local Enterprise Development Unit (LEDU) and the Industrial Training Service (ITS), is the first of its kind in N Ireland. It provides a unique opportunity for those owners/managers concerned about the survival and/or growth of their businesses to:

review their past and present business position, seeking reasons for lack of growth;

identify current and anticipated obstacles to survival/growth;

seek means of overcoming these obstacles;

set growth targets for their businesses;

develop and implement a business plan.

Method

This is not a 'taught' programme in the traditional teaching sense. Instead the participants meet together in small groups to help identify, analyse and solve each others business problems, and facilitate the preparation and implementation of development plans.

Each group is assisted by an experienced adviser who makes specialist and expert advice available to the group, and calls upon the full range of Polytechnic staff and facilities as required.

Composition of groups is by mutual agreement, so that problems, business plans, etc. can be discussed on a collaborative and strictly confidential basis. By working with people who have experienced similar problems, supported by specialists in all relevant fields, each participant develops the confidence to look afresh at his business, and to work towards the realisation of its full potential as well as his own.

ITS reviews the effectiveness of each programme.

Time and Duration

The time demanded by the programme depends upon the nature of the problems and the availability of each participant. It is normally assumed however, that for attendance at group meetings, a commitment of 3 hours per fortnight for approximately nine months is required. There is also an introductory two-day residential period plus additional residentials as determined by group members. These are held in various hotels throughout N Ireland.

Location

Meetings are held in the Polytechnic, in participants' firms and/or on a residential basis.

Fee

£495 per person (at 1982)

The Local Enterprise Development Unit grant, aid 50% of the programme fee for suitable applicants.

In addition, the financial support of Allied Irish Banks enables the programme fee to cover residential periods and Workshops as required by participants.

FEU Commentary

This example displays the following characteristics of flexibility as seen from the perspective of the learner, the teacher, and the educational manager:

1. THE LEARNER
Aims and contents of the learning built around the needs of the learner.

State of development of the learner:	evidence of work and life experience.
Methods of learning:	interaction with other learners.
Method of Assessment:	self-assessment, and perceived utility for the task of management.
Disadvantages to the learner:	cost and time commitment; and group concensus on issues to be dealt with.

2. THE TEACHER

Content not predetermined within the parameters of a set of overall aims.

State of development of the learner:	use of evidence of work and life experience.
Methods of learning:	co-operation with other colleagues.
	interaction between learners.

All supporting the learner through a process of negotiation and, counselling and guidance.

Method of Assessment:	no constraint; no examining and validating procedures involved.
Disadvantages to the teacher:	no pre-determined programme.

3. THE EDUCATIONAL MANAGER

No gains, but self-financing course.

APPENDIX 4

St Johns Centre of the Central Manchester College; Directed Private Study (DPS) Unit

Role of the DPS Unit

The DPS Unit exists mainly to develop and produce learning materials and to provide courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications for students for whom the conventional FE provision is unsuitable. It is hoped that the Unit will eventually provide a service in these fields to other institutions on a collaborative basis.

Courses Offered

* BEC General Certificate in Distribution
* BEC National Certificate in Business Studies
* BEC National Certificate in Distribution
* Passenger Service Vehicle Certificate of Professional Competence (National)
* Goods Vehicle Certificate of Professional Competence (National) [New material available from September 1983]

Methodology

The basis of all the courses is high quality correspondence material designed around objectives and assignments to be student centred and self-contained. Every effort is made to involve the student in the learning process.

The transport courses are purely correspondence with an optional face-to-face revision day at college. The BEC courses have a compulsory face-to-face element.

All students, however, are encouraged to contact tutors when they wish to discuss their work.

Increasing use is being made of the materials produced by the Unit, in face-to-face teaching in the College.

The Unit hopes to develop links with commercial and industrial organisations enabling its courses to be used as part of an overall training programme.

Enrolment

All the courses are offered nationally and students can enrol at any time. The Unit endeavours to give each student an individual study programme geared to the date of a particular final examination.

FEU Commentary

This example displays the following characteristics of flexibility as seen from the perspective of the learner, the teacher and the educational manager:—

1. THE LEARNER

Methods of learning:	use of specially-prepared materials;
	attendance at centre *not* necessary;
	pace of learning determined by personal progress.
Disadvantages to the learner:	progress dependent upon personal commitment and motivation, and cost.

2. THE TEACHER

Process of learning:	use of non-traditional methods with organising/advisory role;
	pace of learning determined by the individual learner's progress.

All supporting the learner through a process of negotiation and, counselling and guidance.

Disadvantages to the teacher:	tutorial activities not predetermined; some administrative load.

3. THE EDUCATIONAL MANAGER

No gains; and involvement in very different administrative and financial procedures. But scheme essentially self-financing.

APPENDIX 5

Case Study: Open College Federation of the North West

1. DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEDERATION

The Federation originated from proposals made by Nelson and Colne College in 1975, and developed in conjunction with the University of Lancaster and Preston Polytechnic. In addition to those three establishments it currently involves:—

Accrington and Rossendale College;
Blackburn College of Technology and Design;
Blackpool and Fylde College of Further and Higher Education;
Burnley College of Arts and Technology;
Lancaster College of Adult Education;
Lancaster and Morecambe College of Further Education;
Leigh College;
The Technical College, Southport;
West Cumbria College, Workington;
Wigan College of Technology;
W R Tuson College, Preston;

The Federation is administered by a Committee which reports to the Senate of the University and to the Academic Board of the Polytechnic. The Committee is composed of representatives from the University and the Polytechnic; from the participating colleges of Adult and Further Education which conduct the scheme; and from the LEA's of Lancashire, Cumbria and Wigan. Lancashire LEA provides a co-ordinator to liaise between the Federation members.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE FEDERATION SCHEME

The scheme is intended to offer mature students a route into higher education, other than by taking 'O' and 'A' level examinations, and also to provide courses of study worth taking for their own sake for those who do not wish to proceed to higher education. Courses within the Open College have been developed specifically to meet the needs of adults and are taught by staff who have wide experience of teaching mature students and can appreciate their particular requirements.

The scheme is based upon the concept of an individual programme of units, chosen by the student over a period of time, dependent upon his or her particular interests, needs and personal circumstances but as guided by tutors at each of the Federation centres. There are two types of unit:

Stage A units which are designed to develop study techniques and introduce students to a subject, and Stage B units, equivalent to 'A' levels, which are topic based. Stage A units are intended to help adult students to ease their way back into formal learning and to get a feel for the humanities, languages, mathematics, sciences and social sciences before making a further subject choice. Thus, students are not committed to a subject or career choice when they enrol at any of the colleges offering courses. There are two enrolment points – September and February.

Stage B units can either meet particular interests shown by students by taking a topic-based approach (eg People in Organisations, Criminology) or may draw upon several subject disciplines and cut across traditional subject areas (eg The Educational Process, Edwardian Britain) or allow the adult to follow a subject in a more traditional form (eg Music, Geology). Some subjects are offered in a modular form so that, for example, a student is able to study one area of Mathematics or Physics, without having to complete a full course in those subjects.

All of these units have been developed by the teaching staff at the Adult and Further Education Colleges within the Federation in consultation with advisers from the University and Polytechnic. New units which meet the scheme's objectives can be rapidly developed and approved. Existing units are constantly monitored and can be readily updated and improved. Stage A units are internally assessed so that students do not feel intimidated by the thought of examinations early in the course. Stage B units are assessed by formal examination, but up to 50% of the final mark is based upon continuous assessment and assignments. The Federation has a specialist subcommittee for syllabuses and assessment to monitor the development of units and programmes.

3. METHOD OF ATTENDANCE

Stage A units have 50 hours of classroom tuition and last half a year, or less: Stage B units have 100 hours of tuition, and last a whole year. Most students attend at any of the centres for 2½-3 hours per week, with additional time available for individual tuition, study-days, etc. However,

two of the Stage A units (Study Techniques and Methods of Enquiry) are available in distance learning form (and have been published by the National Extension College). A recent grant from the FEU has allowed Stage B Criminology to be developed in home study form, (this should be available for circulation in September 1983) and Lancashire LEA has made funds available to facilitate the development of independent learning materials. Current level of recruitment (at September 1982): 977 enrolments on 20 Stage A units; and 512 enrolments on 18 Stage B units.

4. ENTRY TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Satisfactory completion of two Stage B units, (for which four Stage A units is normally the necessary preparation), is validated as being the equivalent of two 'A' level passes for entry to degree courses in the University, the Polytechnic, and the University's associated colleges. An increasing number of adults satisfactorily completing Open College courses have begun degree courses: the number reached over 100 in October 1982. These include engineers, electricians, a master baker, secretaries and housewives. Additionally since 1979 over 50 students have been admitted to higher education courses *outside* the Federation.

The combined assessments of Stage B units (course-work *plus* end-test) are regarded as being indicative of the suitability of individual students for learning within higher education as follows:—

60% + . . . "well suited to undergraduate work"

40-59% . . . "possible suitability to undertake degree level work"

less than 40% . . . "the course has been completed".

Professional bodies and employers have also indicated that they would be prepared to accept Open College Stage B units as the equivalent of GCE 'A' levels. These include the Civil Service Commission, the College of Occupational Therapists, the General Nursing Council and the Institute of Personnel Management.

5. FEES

At the 1982/83 rates £27.60 per 100 hours tuition – £13.80 per 50 hours. (Equivalent to Group IV Part-time Vocational Classes)

Examination fees: Stage A units no charge; Stage B units £7.50 per unit, or £3.75 per module.

FEU Commentary

This example displays the following characteristics of flexibility as seen from the perspective of the learner, the teacher and the educational manager:—

1. THE LEARNER

Aims and content of the learning built around the needs of the learner.

State of development of the learner:	evidence of work and life experience.
Methods of learning:	use of non-traditional methods, with the teacher as organiser and adviser;
	use of other types of resources;
	interaction with others.
Methods of Assessment:	partly non-traditional methods agreed with receiving agencies.

2. THE TEACHER

Aims and content of the learning not pre-determined beyond general intention of providing the acceptability.

Method of learning:	use of non-traditional methods, with organising/advisory role.
Method of Assessment:	agreed with receiving agencies.

All supporting the learner through a process of negotiation and, counselling and guidance, with assessment.

Accountability:	entry to higher education
Disadvantages to the teacher:	system dependent upon the quality of, and commitment to the preparation of learning materials.

3. THE EDUCATIONAL MANAGER

Utilisation of Resources:	co-ordination of the activities of different institutions, but at the cost of adopting different administrative and financial procedures.

The FEU is funding a research project to monitor the development of a similar federation in Manchester. See FEU PIB RP 64. 'Manchester Open College Federation'. A federation is also being set up in London, 'The Open College of South London', and a number of other Open College type schemes are being developed in various parts of the country.

APPENDIX 6

Case Study: Regional Advisory Council for the Organisation of Further Education in the East Midlands

1. The Regional Advisory Council for the Organisation of Further Education in the East Midlands is now known as the East Midlands Further Education Council. What follows are further notes of a survey conducted on behalf of the Regional Academic Board of arrangments for open access to further and higher education.

2. In the light of the interest in and development of systems designed to promote open access to further and higher education a survey was conducted into the provisions being made in the East Midlands in 1981*.

3. The following summary was compiled on the basis of a rate of return of 100%, information having been received now either in writing or by telephone as follows:—

LEA's.....5
Colleges.....41
Polytechnics.....2
Universities.....4

It contains entries in respect of 24 establishments which have indicated the existence of relevant arrangements at present or which anticipate their introduction in the foreseeable future (see pages 27-32).

4. The information available indicates that attempts are being made in a variety of ways to enhance open access in further and higher education. It will be apparent that in many instances such attempts are shaped by particularly economic or geographical circumstances. (Several establishments have reported for example, that their present intentions are frustrated by the absence of adequate resources. It appears also that one local education authority at least has introduced a conscious policy of co-ordination and rationalisation of the efforts to be made by its colleges.)

5. The information also confirms the impression presented to the Regional Academic Board in the first instance that developments relating to "openness" in further and higher education in general conform neither to a standard pattern nor a common terminology.

* Since the publication of the survey many colleges have undertaken considerable developments with regard to flexible learning; individual colleges will be able to give updated information.

FEU Commentary

The survey, whilst perhaps lacking the sort of detailed descriptions of individual college activities to enable a thorough-going analysis to be carried out and now, of course, somewhat dated, is indicative of several common characteristics across the colleges of a particular region at a point in time:—

1. the concern with the difficulties of making certain traditional qualifications particularly 'O' and 'A' levels, available to mature students who may not be able to attend college in the normal way;

2. the concern to make available to those same mature students access to opportunities in higher education, either using the 'O'/'A' level route or an alternative route agreed with a receiving HE institution.

These two related concerns account for the majority of flexible learning provisions in the survey, as compared, for example, with meeting new technological needs or developing qualifications not directly related to higher education.

However, whilst there are one or two indications of a widening of interest in the potential of greater flexibility and of some local education authority interest it is equally true that such flexibility as exists (as identified by the survey) is vulnerable to economic pressures on staffing and expenditure from local authorities.

In terms of the total number of establishments in the region (47) and the actual size of the commitment of each of those establishments, the level of involvement in flexible learning may appear to be limited. In part this may result from particular focus inherent in the survey on new types of provision rather than the promotion of flexibility within existing provisions. Yet, the survey does appear to demonstrate that flexibility is a "live issue" in colleges and that further encouragement of those colleges would produce beneficial results.

College/ Polytechnic	Titles/ Terms for Open Access	Origins/ Motivation/ Date of Commencement	"Open" Courses/ Programmes	Client Groups	Student Numbers	Structure and Costs	Staffing: Conditions of Service Training etc	Links with established/ conventional courses/ other centres	Plans for further development
Wellingborough Technical College									Currently investigating the future role of General Education and Open Access type courses which could well be introduced later
Beeston College of FE		In early stages of developing facilities to create opportunities for open access to learning programmes provided by and through the college. Interest has developed from substantial involvement with mature student provision – especially "second chance" opportunities.				A learning resources complex created with the following: – periodicals; reference and library books; reprographics; audio visual unit; computer suite; careers; open access/private study base.			Production of distance learning programmes, especially in micro-processing, could accelerate production of suitable software for use in open access courses eg TEC.
Derby College of FE	'FlexiStudy'		5 'O' and 'A' level subjects (AEB).		30	Students' fee £30 – includes 10 tutorials – hope to make more available if needed (at extra cost).			Through dissatisfaction with NEC material. Sociology units and Economic History course being rewritten. BEC/TEC staff becoming interested.
Derby, Lonsdale College of HE	"Contained open learning": a. Gateway programme leading into – b. Pathway I c. Pathway II.	In keeping with CNAA's document "Extension of Access to Higher Education." GCE 'O' & 'A' Level exam not objective.		21 years eg housewives wanting to begin or continue in HE, redundant or other men requiring retraining – no formal qualifications required.	a. 21 b. 11	Regular classes (rather than individual tutorials/ distance learning) a. 1 (shortened) day for each of 10 weeks. b. 2 (shortened) days for each of 10 weeks. c. 2 (shortened) days for each of 10 weeks. The fees are for a. £10, b. £20, c. £20.		Subject matter will cover a wide area but also will be linked directly into proposed p/t CNAA BA course. Other colleges in area appear to be interested in offering similar Gateway/Pathway courses.	

College/ Polytechnic	Titles/ Terms for Open Access	Origins/ Motivation/ Date of Commencement	"Open" Courses/ Programmes	Client Groups	Student Numbers	Structure and Costs	Staffing: Conditions of Service Training etc	Links with established/ conventional courses/ other centres	Plans for further development
South East Derbyshire College	"FlexiStudy"		GCE 'O' & 'A' level, OU Prep Courses & CGLI 600 series courses in advanced construct. subjects (including site management).		113	Correspondence material and regular tutorials provided. No fixed time before exam; extra tutorials available if requested. Fees – £30-40 for 'O' & 'A' level & £20-30 for OU Prep courses.			
Melton Mowbray College of FE			None at present but considering use of NEC materials.						LEA has requested that development in the County be co-ordinated in the following beliefs: – 1. demand a likely to be greatest for 'O' and 'A' level tuition 2. a need is likely in certain technical fields 3. the size needed to justify the necessary administrative and referral systems.
Tresham College		None at present.							An inter-departmental working party to report shortly.
Arnold and Carlton College of FE		None at present.							The need has been recognised and it is hoped to be able to initiate something in September 1982.
Boston College of FE		None at present.							Discussions have taken place on possible new approaches to GCE work.
Bishop Grosseteste College			Informal lectures and sessions open to the community.					The College is a centre for the OU.	Enthusiastic to develop community/neighbourhood approaches (of a University extra-mural programme).
Nene College	GCE 'A' level.	Long standing. To provide opportunities for mature students to achieve qualifications for HE.	Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Pure and Applied Maths, Economics, English, History, Sociology and Art.	Mature students.	40(1979-80).				Not offered in 1980-1 as a result of cuts in staffing expenditure.

College/ Polytechnic	Titles/ Terms for Open Access	Origins/ Motivation/ Date of Commencement	"Open" Courses/ Programmes	Client Groups	Student Numbers	Structure and Costs	Staffing: Conditions of Service Training etc	Links with established/ conventional courses/ other centres	Plans for further development
Nene College	Postal Communications	Since 1979. To satisfy the training needs of those unable to attend an institution.	TEC A2 (Mainly level 1 units).	Post Office Engineers.	24 (1980-81).	Correspondence material; regular contacts by telephone; personal tutorials where required.	2 hours remission for staff.	Validated by TEC.	Proposals for level 2 units (Discussions have occurred regarding a similar scheme for Assoc. of Lift Manufacturers for TEC Lift Technology. Thought has been given to offering distance learning from the Leather Centre.
Trent Polytechnic	"Access Learning"	In operation since the beginning of 1980/81 academic year in order to open up Poly to public on a limited basis and to identify body of students wanting further study.	a. degree & other courses. b. provision for students wishing to prepare for HE confined at present to Arts, Soc. Sciences & Environmental Studies.	Members of general public (no entry qualifications stipulated).		Fees charged; a. initial programme of lectures and b. further diagnosis course to prepare for HE.	Meetings have been convened of reps of LEA's & selected colleges to consider issues of common interest.	"Open" students attend lectures on some degree & other courses alongside conventional student body.	Extension of type b. opening to Engineering & Science.
University of Leicester		Recognises successful completion of certain "Open Access" courses for the purposes of the matriculation of mature students.							
Derbyshire College of Agriculture							Strong professional interest but no funds or staffing available.		

College/ Polytechnic	Titles/ Terms for Open Access	Origins/ Motivation/ Date of Commencement	"Open" Courses/ Programmes	Client Groups	Student Numbers	Structure and Costs	Staffing: Conditions of Service Training etc	Links with established/ conventional courses/ other centres	Plans for further development
Coalville Technical College	"FlexiStudy"	Commencing September 1979 to accommodate students unable to attend at regular times or because of other commitments e.g. occupational or family ties, or who find it difficult to fit into the traditional class atmosphere.	General dressmaking/ tailoring GCE 'O' or 'A' level dress.	General dress/tailoring and GCE 'O' level—equivalent or good general dressmaking required—selection by interview.	1979/80 Gen. Dress/ Tailoring: 6 GCE Dress 'A' level: 6 (No first year intro. in 1980/81).	For Gen Dress—contact by telephone Tutorial and use of room (facilities) by appointment. For 'O' & 'A'—2 hrs regular attendance per week for 2 yrs + additional contact by telephone on appointment, if required. Fees are comparable with those for traditional courses.			No "FlexiStudy" planned 1981/82
Loughborough Technical College			Intensive language programme for industry.			i. Organised by the General Education Departments. ii. Students sponsored by a firm have a 50 hr block programme arranged by agreement with the Course Tutor and the firm. iii. Classes formed of 2/3 students per Tutor. iv. Tapes provided for home use. v. Cost to firm: £8 per hour).	Teaching staff paid £6 per hr.		
Hinckley College of FE	"FlexiStudy" (Home based study courses)		Pre-'O' level 'A' level subjects; short courses (e.g. child development and playgroups.	People who can only or prefer to study at home.		NEC correspondence material and tutorials used. Normally 10 tutorials convenient to students and tutor. Admission at any time of the year. Costs £12 (for short course)—£38.50 (certain 'O' and 'A' level subjects).			

College/ Polytechnic	Titles/ Terms for Open Access	Origins/ Motivation/ Date of Commencement	"Open" Courses/ Programmes	Client Groups	Student Numbers	Structure and Costs	Staffing: Conditions of Service Training etc.	Links with established/ conventional courses/ other centres	Plans for further development
Wigston College of FE	"FlexiStudy"	From 1980/81 academic year.	Principally 'O' and 'A' level subjects.			NEC material used.	Range of open courses of staff resources.		
Newark Technical College	"FlexiStudy"		Principally 'O' and 'A' level subjects.			NEC material used.			
North Notts College of FE	"FlexiStudy"		Principally 'O' and 'A' level subjects.			NEC material used.			
West Bridgford College of FE	"FlexiStudy"		Principally 'O' and 'A' level subjects.			NEC material used.			
Lincoln College of Technology	"FlexiStudy"	Commencing February 1981.	'O' & 'A' level English & 'O' level Maths.	a. Students in isolated areas b. students with extreme disabilities c. shift workers d. students not inclined to attend formal FE classes & who traditionally have turned to correspondence courses e. potential students with pre-emptive commitments e.g. married women.		Use NEC material. Intended to be self-supporting.	Payment or time allowance on the following basis – GCE 'O' level – 2 hrs/week for 12 students 'A' level – 2 hrs/week for 10 students.		
Charles Keene College	"Open College"	To offer access to HE other than by traditional 'O' and 'A' level route as well as general education for adult students.	a. Study Skills module and b. 2 options from :– The English City (and literature); communications; literature and work; literature and society; contemporary urban issues; race relations; community studies; migration; science; women in society etc.	Primarily those without formal academic qualifications – and possibly from an ethnic minority background – who seek to enter HE. Those with general interest also admitted if they are willing to accept inherent academic rigours.	(Nos. not actually given but recruitment for 1980/81 described as somewhat disappointing).	a. 26 x 3 hr sessions b. 1 year (2 options to be taken concurrently). Great importance attached to counselling.	Validation and Examination by Leicester Polytechnic.		

College/ Polytechnic	Titles/ Terms for Open Access	Origins/ Motivation/ Date of Commencement	"Open" Courses/ Programmes	Client Groups	Student Numbers	Structure and Costs	Staffing: Conditions of Service Training etc	Links with established/ conventional courses/ other centres	Plans for further development
Leicester Polytechnic	a. Open College (see entry for Charles Keene) b. Distance Learning (at feasibility stage at present) c. Seminars	To index access to HE for fairly well defined constituencies (Poly's policy is to identify "markets"/needs and to meet as possible in carefully planned ways.		a. See Charles Keene College. b. Practising Pharmacists. c. Managing Directors and other senior staff in industry.	a. See Charles Keene College b. 900 c. 62 per seminar (b + c) = 1400 in total)	b. Modular/credit systems being developed for up dating purposes c. self-financing		a. Validates and examines Charles Keene's Open College courses. b. Pharmaceutical Society of GB (Discussions held with other colleges and Univ. of Leicester) c. initial seminars expected to motivate some to seek more formal part time courses leading to qualifications.	

APPENDIX 7

Flexible Learning: Curriculum-Led Organisation Change

1. Fielden Park College has moved towards a strategy which will eventually produce a *total* approach to the courses and subjects it offers.

2. The current situation (February 1983) shows that:

a. over 350 students are enrolled on FlexiStudy courses;

b. over 100 students have been trained in the printing industry techniques using Learning-by-Appointment systems;

c. an outreach system is available for students with special needs, industry and NACRO organisations;

d. all typing skills are now provided through a workshop method which has over 100 places.

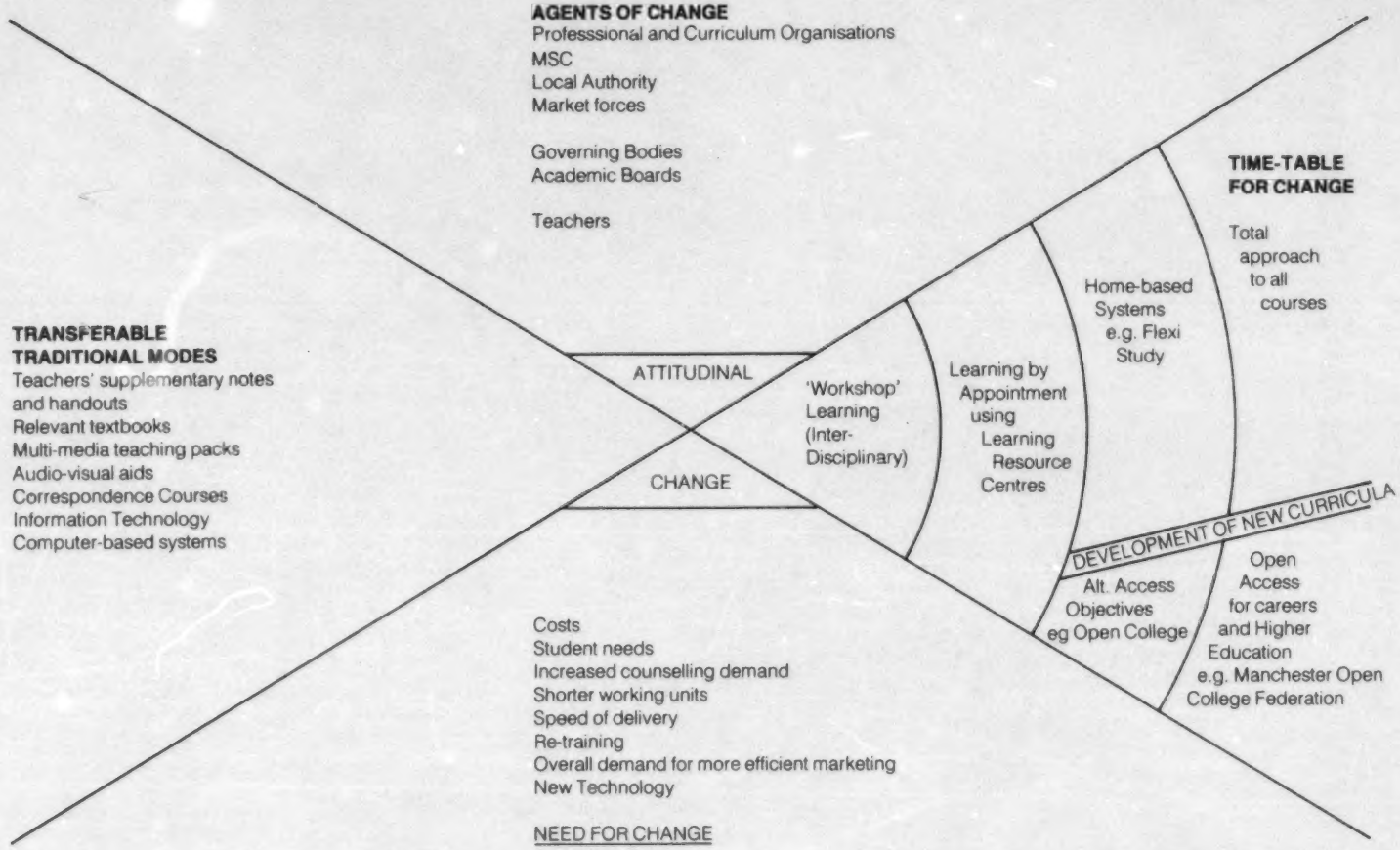
3. Planning exercises are taking place into the logistics of providing workshops in:

Communications;
Accounts and Business Calculation;
Languages;
Mathematics;
Computer Programming;
Literacy.

The major obstacle is the provision of self-paced learning packages with appropriate self-assessment and profile format which is task-related.

4. A change from traditional modes of group teaching to an individualised open learning approach involves attitudinal change and that always constricts before it widens to allow traditional teaching methods to be adapted. In the diagram attached, if we look at the materials available, and through forms of pressure and needs we can produce attitudinal change in separate colleges, then the progress through workshop learning to a total approach to individualised learning becomes possible. It is difficult to represent diagrammatically the need at the same time to provide open access; hence the second axis that has been introduced into the diagram overleaf.

FLEXIBLE LEARNING SYSTEMS: A STRATEGY FOR CHANGE



APPENDIX 8

The Examining and Validating Bodies and Flexible Learning Opportunities

1. The FEU circulated a questionnaire to all examining and validating bodies requesting their responses to certain key issues from their points of view. The FEU's broad policy on flexible learning was explained: FEU's policy is based on the fundamental assumptions:—

that the existing FEU system possesses greater flexibility in meeting new demands on it than it is often given credit for;

that a strategy of encouraging that flexibility is likely to have greater effect in expanding the number of opportunities open to learners than the creation of totally new and independent systems.

2. The examining and validating bodies were asked to comment on a number of issues and their responses are summarised in Figure 1.

FEU Commentary

As indicated in Figure 1 the questionnaire circulated to the examining and validating bodies focussed on three major issues:—

A. PRE-EXAMINATION/VALIDATION CRITERIA

(i) To what extent do you feel it necessary to prescribe pre-entry conditions to your schemes/examinations?

(ii) How much discretion do you allow to local institutions/centres?

Responses indicated that:—

* to varying extents local colleges and centres have discretion with regard to entry of individual candidates to examinations and schemes. It is for the colleges and centres themselves to exercise that discretion.

* even where there are prescribed entry criteria appeals procedures exist, but as one examining and validating body commented, this procedure is not much used.

* there is some evidence that colleges and centres are reluctant to use their discretion, notably in the case of mature students.

B. MODES OF ASSESSMENT

(i) To what extent do you find it necessary to prescribe standard/traditional methods of writing examinations on your schemes/examinations?

(ii) To what extent are local, and other modes of assessment, essential parts of your schemes?

(iii) To what extent are candidates for your examinations required to satisfy pre-requisite conditions?

(iv) To what extent are your schemes bound by a timetable and by minimum numbers of students?

(v) What other constraints have you found it necessary to establish before the issue of some form of certification?

Responses indicated that:—

* traditional methods of written examinations are still common to most examining and validating bodies, though there is flexibility with regard to examination timetables and entry numbers, and with regard to the inclusion of locally-based assessment procedures.

* where locally-based assessment procedures are included they are subject to guidance from the central body, and external moderation and assessment.

C. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

We would welcome any more general comments you would care to make about this whole subject, including our fundamental assumptions about "flexibility".

Responses indicated that:—

* examining and validating bodies are generally supportive of greater flexibility, but they claim that they have to recognise that the chief constraint is the relative inflexibility of the administrative, academic and financial arrangements within the colleges and centres.

* it emerged from several responses that examining and validating bodies lay great stress on their committee structures, committees which are made up of teachers, trainers, employers, trade unionists, and other interested parties, and that it is to those committees that the bodies look for advice on issues like flexibility.

FIG 1 Responses of the Examining and Validating Bodies to the FEU Questionnaire

	A. Pre-Examination/Validation Criteria		B. Modes of Assessment					C. General Considerations	
	i prescribed	ii local discretion	i prescribed standard methods	ii local assessment procedures	iii exam pre-entry criteria	iv timetable and Min No's	v other constraints	i pro-flexibility	ii contra-flexibility
BEC	Min. age of entry to course plus pre-entry qualification (except BEC General).	For mature students (19+) with an appeals procedure for younger students.	Required: BEC General has BEC exams. Others locally set.	Required, with guidance BEC General exams three times a year. Other at college discretion. Usually annually.	Must have registered BEC and completed a BEC approval course.	Mostly 1 year courses.	Validation procedures + visiting moderators for Bi & ii).	Directed Private Study (DPS) and correspondence routes exist.	
CGLI	Very exceptionally where professional or industrial recognition involved. Then employment required. Also lower level achievement required in some high level work.	Full discretion.	Required.	Required with guidance.	Course completion within guidelines. Provision for external candidates.	Annual exam timetable, with examinations on request (at full cost if set centrally). No min No's.	Exam components to be taken at the same time (except resits).	Working on this (via Hargreaves & other developments) Recognising many non-FE centres.	
CNAA	Minimum academic qualifications.	As equivalent to Ai) or mature students or courses designed for non-standard entry as a whole.	Normally expected as a proportion of the final assessment as agreed in course proposal.	With a local board of examiners.	Validated programme of study (with at least some face-to-face tuition).	Locally-devised within max and min number of years "interested in student No's".	CNAA approved external examiners on local board. Insistence on internal monitoring evaluation. CNAA Review visits at both course and institutional level.	Principles & regulations under constant review. Willing to run pilot schemes.	
EMFEC	None save in a few courses where e.g. 'O' level English required.	Yes.	Required—but Council reserves right to cancel exam if number low.	In-course assessment on some courses.	In many courses satisfactory completion of e.g. General studies and laboratory work required.	Annual exam timetable, with additional provision if necessary. No min student No's.	Exam components to be taken at the same time (except resits).	Flexibility desirable.	But not necessarily cost-effective or administratively/ academically feasible.
LCCI	Exceptionally, recommendation made re age, likely attainment level for success.	Yes.	Required.	No (except possible to have a local dimension to Bi).	No.	Annual exam timetable, with additional provision if necessary. No min student No's.	No.	Flexibility desirable.	But not necessarily cost-effective or administratively/ academically feasible.
NEBSS	By age/& by implication, adequate educational achievement.	Yes.	Required or approved alternative.	Required as specified.	80% course attendance.	Min/max hours set. No's below 8 undesirable.	No resits outside 12 months.	Yes, providing national minimum.	
NCFE	No.	Yes.	See C.		See A (onus on the recruiting policy of the centre responsible for entering candidates.	Annual timetable of examinations. No minimum student numbers.	See C. Exam components to be taken at the same time (except resits).	Assessment procedures dependent on view taken by subject committee, with wide variations between committees.	
NNEB	No.	Full autonomy within approved procedures.	Required.	Required.	Examination within the final term of an approved course.	Maximum student intake for each college prescribed.	External examiners & approval of internal examiners.	Practical and moral constraints of preparation for work with young children in maintaining standards of assessment of student achievement of learning objectives.	
PITMANS	Some guidance regarding entry levels for success.	Yes, with feedback to the centres on performance of entrants.	Required.	No.	Command of English.	Examinations on demand no min student No's.	No.	Policy of providing examinations on demand.	
RSA	No; some recommendations.	Full discretion.	Required for some schemes, other are non-traditional, ie profile from continuous assessment without examination.	Required for some schemes.	Not for examinations; course requirements for continuous assessment schemes.	Four exam series per year; Mode III available; no minimum numbers.	Some schemes require course approval.	Flexibility desirable; pilot schemes; recognition of industry-based training.	Recognise LEA/college constraints on attendance patterns, etc.
TEC	Recommendations made (part academic performance.	For post-experience students.	Model plans available.	With TEC validation (and guidance).		Locally determined within.	Validated assessment plans and external moderation.	TEC policy encourages.	Aware of local economic & organisational constraints.
WJEC	No.	Yes.	Required.	All in agriculture; parts of other schemes.	Course completion (no external candidates).	Annual exam timetable, No min student No's.	Exam components to be taken at same time (except resits).	Some piloting of flexible learning schemes.	
WMACFE	No.	Subject to reports from external moderators.	Required.	In some cases.	See A Entry via approved courses only. Special provision for external candidates.	Annual Exam timetable. No min entry No's & provision for full-cost exams if required.	Exam components to be taken at the same time (except resits).	Yes.	But recognises the economic constraints on small colleges & centres.

BEC Business Education Council **CGLI** City and Guilds of London Institute **CNAA** Council for National Academic Awards **EMFEC** East Midlands Further Education Council **LCCI** London Chamber of Commerce and Industry **NEBSS** National Examination Board for Supervisory Studies
NCFE Northern Council for Further Education **NNEB** National Nursery Examinations Board **RSA** Royal Society of Arts **TEC** Technician Education Council **WJEC** Welsh Joint Education Committee **WMACFE** West Midlands Advisory Council for Further Education

APPENDIX 9

Criteria for FEU Financial Support for Flexible Learning Projects in Colleges and LEA's

1. Tables 1, 2 and 3 of this document (see pages 5-7) identify the dimensions of flexibility as might be seen from three perspectives: the learner; the teacher; and the educational manager. Each dimension is supported by exemplary outcomes of increased flexibility and references to a series of appendices; and it may be that in themselves each dimension, and the way in which the dimensions combine, is useful to colleges and LEA's in identifying potential areas of activity.

2. However, it was noted that to date advances towards greater flexibility have tended to concentrate on particular issues, most notably on what is defined in this document as the "process of learning", at the expense of others. Whilst no doubt there is still considerable work to be done on those components which constitute the "process of learning" as defined (viz the mode of learning; the resources of learning; the mode of attendance; the pace of learning; and interaction with others), the FEU would like to encourage colleges and LEA's to consider some of the other issues and the way in which they relate to the process of learning.

3. For example, it would be useful to identify and resolve some of the obvious difficulties which emerge when, through negotiation and, counselling and guidance, the teacher seeks to match the process of learning with the learner's desired aims and content of learning and his or her stage of development. Similarly, how can this matching be supported by the development of appropriate initial assessment techniques?

4. From the teacher's point of view how can such activities be accounted for, rewarded and supported through skill development? What are the implications for the educational managers of the development of such new systems?

5. With points like this in mind the FEU would like to apply the following criteria for applications to it from individual colleges, small groups of them or LEA's for financial support for flexible learning research and development:—

(i) that the project should take account of all three perspectives – the learner, the teacher and the educational manager;

(ii) that the project should look at more than one issue of those identified in Tables 1, 2 and 3 of the main paper and at the relationship between two or more issues;

(iii) that the project should embrace elements of staff and organisational development to ensure the continuity of the innovation after the funded stage;

(iv) that the project should include an element of (self-) evaluation;

(v) one of the outcomes of the project should be the preparation of a report suitable for publication by the FEU and dissemination within the FE system.

6. In view of the likely level of demand for FEU financial support, it is probable that several other factors will be taken into account in identifying successful applicants:—

(i) the level of existing activity within the college(s) or LEA concerned with flexible learning;

(ii) the level of resource allocation within the college(s) or LEA to the project in addition to anticipated FEU funding.

7. Colleges and LEA's may anticipate that the FEU will be prepared to fund a range of individual projects at various levels of funding ranging from a few hundred to £15,000 pa, but applications for sums outside this range will be given consideration, although the FEU is not aiming to duplicate the work of the MSC Open Tech programme.

8. The FEU would welcome informal discussions prior to formal application, and interested parties are invited to contact the Chief Officer in the first instance.

APPENDIX 10
Flexible Learning Support Agencies

BBC Support Service
P O Box 7, 252 Western Avenue, London W3 6XJ
publisher of broadcast support materials.

Careers & Occupational Information Centre (COIC)
Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ publisher of Basic Skills Unit materials which include the Jobkit materials aimed at increasing jobsearch autonomy in 16-19 year olds and adult Routefinding.

Council for Educational Technology (CET)
3 Devonshire Street, London W1N 2BA publisher of OLS Newsletter, working papers, guidelines and training packages.

Further Education Unit
Elizabeth House, York Road, London SE1 7PH
supports reviews and curriculum developments in flexible learning in further education

Further Education Staff College
provides an Open Learning Systems Information and Advisory Unit at Coombe Lodge, Blagdon, Bristol BS18 6RG. Contact Jack Latcham.

The Open Tech Unit, MSC
Room E526 Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ. They will publish 'Open Tech Bulletin' in 1983

National Extension College
18 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 2HN
publisher of information about correspondence education and support materials for FlexiStudy linked courses

Open Learning Federation
publisher of Newsletter and brings together organisations providing and supporting flexible learning. Contact Mr P Marshall, Head of Department of Community Studies, Barnet College, Wood Street, Barnet, Herts.

APPENDIX 11
Further Reading

Association for Educational and Training Technology *Aspects of educational technology XV: distance learning and evaluation.* Proceedings of AETT 1981 Conference. Kogan Page, 1982

BOUD, D. *Developing student autonomy in learning.* Kogan Page, 1981

Council for Educational Technology. *Open learning.* Information sheet No. 5. CET, 1982

COFFEY, J. *Development of an open learning system for further education: a report.* Council for Educational Technology, 1978

Coombe Lodge Information Bank Papers

IBN 1609	*Open learning: a register of participating institutions*
IBN 1698	*An open learning system at Harrogate College of Art and Adult Studies*
IBN 1624	*Individualised learning: the total approach of Holland College*
IBN 1119	*FlexiStudy: the professional tutorial system operated at Redditch College*
IBN 1376	*Distance learning provision for telecommunication students in Scotland*

(These papers are available from the Further Education Staff College, Coombe Lodge).

FURNISS, B.S. and PARSONAGE, J.R. *Independent learning in tertiary science education.* Thames Polytechnic/Chemical Education Society, 1975

LEWIS, R. *How to tutor in an open learning scheme: group study version.* Council for Educational Technology, 1981

LEWIS, R. *How to tutor in an open learning scheme: self study version.* Council for Educational Technology, 1981

LEWIS, R. *How to write self study materials.* Council for Educational Technology, 1981

LEWIS, R. and JONES, G. *How to write a distance-learning course: a self study pack for authors.* Council for Educational Technology, 1981

National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education. *Open learning: a policy statement.* NATFHE, 1981

With an appendix of examples:—

Barnet	(FlexiStudy)
Bath	(Learning by Appointment)
Bradford	(Maths Workshop)
Doncaster	(Quarrying)
Napier	(Library Assoc)
Nelson & Colne	(Open College)
Redditch	(FlexaStudy)
S W London	(DPS)

National Extension College. *FlexiStudy register.* NEC, 1982

NOBLE, P. *Resource-based learning in post-compulsory education.* Kogan Page, 1980

YELTON, S., PURNIMA, T. and CONNER, B. *The open learning directory 1983: a catalogue of distance learning and independent study materials, basics to 'A' level.* Great Ouse Press, 1983

Scottish Council for Educational Technology *FlexiStudy at Telford College.* Open Learning Paper 101. SCET, 1982

Scottish Council for Educational Technology. *Six courses linked to the BBC computer literacy project.* Open Learning Paper 201. SCET, 1982

SPENCER, D.C. *Thinking about open learning systems.* Council for Educational Technology, 1980

With reference to a number of case studies.

Case A	FlexiStudy – Barnet College
Case B	Mathematics Workshop. Bradford College
Case C	Doncaster Assisted Private Study Course in Quarrying
Case D	Napier College Directed Private Study for the professional examinations of the Library Association.
Case E	Nelson and Colne – The Open College Scheme
Case F	South-West London College – Directed Private Study.

TWINING, J. ed. *Open learning for technicians.* Stanley Thornes, 1982

FEU Publications

Flexible learning opportunities is one of a number of FEU publications intended to inform teachers and others and to stimulate professional discussion about matters of concern to the FE service.

Other FEU publications mentioned in the text of this document include:

Further opportunities in focus: a study of bridging courses for women	July 1980 9084
Transition and access: a review of low level courses in ILEA	February 1981 9310
Curriculum control: a review of major styles of curriculum design in FE	March 1981 9377
FEU response to an 'Open Tech' programme	June 1981 9337
Tutoring: the guidance and counselling role of the tutor in vocational preparation	June 1982 9655
Teaching skills: towards a strategy of staff development for vocational preparation	June 1982 9708
Curriculum opportunity: a map of experiential learning in entry requirements to higher and further education award bearing courses	May 1983 9950

Copies of these documents (which are free of charge) are obtainable from the Publications Despatch Centre, DES, Honeypot Lane, Canons Park, Stanmore, Middlesex, HA7 1AZ.

A complete list of FEU publications is also available from the above address.

Details of FEU research projects mentioned in this publication are available from FEU, Room 5/89, Elizabeth House, York Road, London SE1 7PH.